



To the esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing regarding the Governor's proposed FY 24-25 budget. It is disappointing that the Governor's proposed budget decreases funding for Arts and Culture organizations back to pre-COVID levels. As Chief Executive Officer of your New Haven Symphony Orchestra, I know firsthand the tremendous impact that increased arts funding has had in recent years.

Public funding at current levels is vital to offset rising expenses as professional performing organizations return to full seasons of concert programming at a time when earned revenue from contracted and ticket revenue is significantly reduced. Our audience is coming back, but slowly. Government funds have assured arts jobs are available to professional artists during this transition time and performing arts events are once again fueling local economies. Cutting public funding will undo this progress in returning to health.

General operating support for the arts, culture, and heritage sector is always essential, but as we collectively emerge from the height of the pandemic, it is even more vital. Unrestricted funding helps organizations fill financial gaps left by a slow return of audiences, return strong with programming that makes our state a vibrant place to live, and provide work for the artists who lost so much during the pandemic. For maximum impact, we need these public funds to be provided consistently over time. This minimizes operational disruption, improves long-term planning and sustainability, and maximizes the return on the State's investment.

There is now an alternative in HB 6692 that supports a proposal presented by Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Tourism Coalition to provide meaningful, reliable, and equitable investment in these important contributors to the state's economy and workforce.

These sectors have historically been underfunded by the state. We make Connecticut a more attractive place to visit, work, and live.

*The New Haven Symphony Orchestra inspires, delights, challenges, and connects diverse audiences and communities through the power of live music.*



Your New Haven Symphony Orchestra has served the people of Connecticut for 129 seasons. We take great pride in the fact that Connecticut is home to the fourth oldest orchestra in the United States.

Deeply committed to new American music, the NISO will perform 20 world premieres between 2007 – 2024. Current projects have celebrated deep roots in the community by arranging visits throughout New Haven’s neighborhoods by living composers and NISO performers. Our fall 2022 premiere, *To Awaken the Sleeper*, was New Haven composer Joel Thompson’s stunning meditation on the writings of James Baldwin. To end the season, your New Haven Symphony Orchestra will perform a movement New Haven composer Helen Hagan’s *Piano Concerto No.1*. The first Black woman to graduate from Yale when she received a degree from the Yale School of Music, Ms. Hagan appeared as soloist and composer then she debuted the work with your New Haven Symphony Orchestra in 1912.

The NISO’s Education Programs wide-ranging menu of opportunities include statewide Young People’s Concerts, free Family Concerts, School Night at the Symphony, the Listen Up! Podcast Series, free KidTix, the Junior Board, and the Young Composer’s Project.

The orchestra’s innovative approach to increasing diversity and inclusion in classical music has been recognized nationally. Through the Harmony Fellowship for Underrepresented Musicians, as well as numerous education and community engagement programs, the Symphony strives to be a leader for racial equity in the arts. These ongoing efforts have earned the NISO recognition and awards from the League of American Orchestras, the Getty Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce.

The Symphony is grateful for the extraordinary public funding provided in recent years. It has helped us return strong following a forced hiatus during the pandemic, bring our musicians back to work, and provide invigorating live musical experiences to our richly diverse community.

We appreciate your Committee’s consideration and look forward to working with our representatives as the session progresses.

*The New Haven Symphony Orchestra inspires, delights, challenges, and connects diverse audiences and communities through the power of live music.*